

Claims:

1. A payment processing method using a network of data processing peers, comprising:
 - a. a peer receiving a payment request from a user;
 - b. the peer dynamically selecting a suitable peer on the network to process the payment request;
 - c. the peer conveying user information and payment information to the selected peer; and
 - d. the selected peer attempting to debit an account associated with the user, based at least partially on the conveyed information.
2. The method of claim 1, including alerting the user about success or failure of the attempting by the selected peer.
3. The method of claim 1, including providing at least one of a good, a service, a privilege, and a right to the user if the attempting by the selected peer is successful.
4. The method of claim 1, including the selected peer reporting at least a portion of the conveyed information and information about success or failure of the attempting by the selected peer to a monitoring peer on the network.
5. The method of claim 4, including the monitoring peer storing the reported information at a data storage repository.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the conveyed information is relayed to the selected peer by at least one message-passing peer belonging to the network.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the dynamically selecting is based on a set of at least one criterion including a metric selected from the group consisting of: route length, route latency, data transmission speed, peer availability, cost overhead associated with a peer, and a combination thereof.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting includes pinging a peer on the network to request a payment processing service.
9. The method of claim 8, including, in response to the pinging, the pinged peer determining whether a record exists of a prior request by the user.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein, if the record exists, the pinged peer determines whether a characteristic of the record is sufficient for the pinged peer to authorize the payment request.
11. The method of claim 8, wherein, in response to the pinging, the pinged peer declines to provide the payment processing service.
12. The method of claim 11, including attempting by the pinged peer to locate an alternate peer likely to provide the payment processing service.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein the pinged peer, if successful in locating the alternate peer, responds to the pinging by providing a route to the alternate peer.
14. The method of claim 1, wherein the selected peer includes an entry port where the payment request is received from the user.
15. The method of claim 1, wherein the attempting by the selected peer includes locating a payment processing service external to the network of the peers to execute a debit against an account associated with the user.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the payment processing service includes an entity selected from the group consisting of: a credit card processing

service, a bank, a financial transaction clearinghouse, and a combination thereof.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the peers includes a parking meter.
18. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the peers includes a vending machine.
19. The method of claim 1, wherein a pair of the peers communicate via a wired link.
20. The method of claim 1, wherein a pair of the peers communicate via a wireless link.
21. The method of claim 1, wherein a pair of the peers communicate using a network security protocol.
22. The method of claim 21, wherein the security protocol includes authentication.
23. The method of claim 21, wherein the security protocol includes a secure data tunnel.
24. The method of claim 21, wherein the security protocol includes data encryption.
25. A payment processing method using a network of data processing peers, comprising:
 - a. a peer receiving a payment request from a user;
 - b. based at least partially on stored information about availability and service competency of the peers, the peer selecting a suitable peer on the network to process the payment request;

- c. the peer conveying user information and payment information to the selected peer; and
 - d. the selected peer attempting to debit an account associated with the user, based at least partially on the conveyed information.
26. The method of claim 25, wherein the stored information is updated upon a payment request being responded to by the selected peer, the updated information to be employed by the peer for a future payment request.
27. The method of claim 25, wherein the stored information is updated to reflect an addition of a peer to the network.
28. The method of claim 25, wherein the stored information is updated to reflect a deletion of a peer from the network.
29. The method of claim 26, including the peer broadcasting the updated information to at least one other peer on the network.